



ON THE CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE DÉNÉ TRIBES.

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THE fifth volume of the "Transactions of the Canadian Institute" contained a paper by the Rev. John Campbell, LL.D., which could not fail to interest me.* To say that, after a careful perusal of its pages, all doubt and uncertainty as to the origin of my Déné Indians have vanished from my mind would certainly be going beyond the truth. It may be that I am too exacting; but, as I went on reading, I could not but mentally formulate the strongest objections against, especially, the philological portion of the reverend author's effort. My intention to-day is not to expatiate on what I consider the shortcomings of that most important part of his essay, nor do I even wish to take exception to his conclusions. I intend to confine my attention to answering a few questions, correcting some misinformation and supplying omissions, and that in so far only as I am directly or indirectly concerned. In other words, I would beg to hazard a few remarks on the classifications of the Northern Dénés, such as reviewed by Prof. Campbell.

I hold that the reverend gentleman needlessly impugns the accuracy or appositeness of my information on the subject, such as embodied in my previous communications to the Institute, and, were his queries and hints left unanswered, ethnology would retrograde, on that particular point, to what it was ten years ago. Nor should it be forgotten that other well-meaning ethnographers have lately re-edited the errors against which I have several times protested. Hence the necessity of the following remarks.

Before going any further, and the better to define once for all our respective positions, may I, at the risk of appearing egotistical, be pardoned a remark of a somewhat personal character? † Ethnographers

* "The Dénés of America identified with the Tungus of Asia." My interest in that essay will appear so much the more natural as, some years ago, I published myself a short paper "Déné Roots," the main object of which was to ask for the collaboration of philologists towards the discovery of the Dénés' origin.

† The fact that the opening pages of my first paper contributed to the Institute were devoted to a criticism of an inaccurate classification of the Dénés, a criticism which Prof. Campbell now implicitly rejects, must be my excuse for offering remarks of such a personal character. People should know the grounds of my assurance, so that they may gauge the degree of accuracy of my information. A good point in favour of Prof. Campbell's essay is that, in common with a few other ethnographers, he has adopted the name Déné, which is the only appropriate word to represent that great aboriginal family which in other quarters continues to be called Athapaskan or Tinnéh.

might be divided into two classes: there are the cabinet and the field investigators. On the other hand, ethnological classifications, especially of the American races, are based on language. Now, of the five different Déné tribes whose habitat lies entirely or partially within the northern part of British Columbia, I understand the dialects of three and speak that of the fourth with more facility than English. Within the last three months, my travels have brought me in contact with all or numerous members of the five tribes; so that should I have the faintest doubt about the ethnic status of any division of the Déné family, established in the extreme northwest of this continent, nothing would be more easy for me than to satisfy my curiosity. This by way of explaining my assurance in dealing with such questions.

Nor is this all. I belong to a religious Order which, for the last forty years or more, has had in hand the evangelization of all the Northern Déné tribes, and, through the numerous letters and essays contained in the pages of a private review published by said Order, I was enabled to study the various divisions of our aborigines long before I came here to become, as it were, one of them. One of the ablest and most regular contributors to that periodical which, I repeat, does not circulate among outsiders, was at one time the Rev. E. Petitot, who passed well nigh twenty years of his life in studying the Dénés critically. Now, most of what I ever wrote on the Eastern Dénés was based on his investigations, and in every case due credit was given him. It must be admitted that the opinion of such a scholar who personally knows the different tribes, should outweigh that even of travelers like Hearne and MacKenzie, who, for all their information, were entirely at the mercy of their interpreters and who were doomed occasionally to misunderstand and be misunderstood.* The linguistic data, names of tribes, etc., emanating from such a source are especially subject to caution in connection with languages of so delicate sounds as the Déné. For even such a dull-eared explorer as Sir John Richardson—who seriously derived the word *Esquimaux* from the would-be French "ceux qui miaux" (*lege*: "miaulent")—has confessed that "the sounds of the Tinné language can hardly be expressed by the English alphabet, and a great many of them are of a pronunciation *absolutely impossible* to an Englishman."†

Prof. Campbell quotes three different classifications of the Déné tribes, the first of which is Major G. W. Powell's. Of this he merely

* It is, therefore, a little surprising that, while noting obscure authors in his synonymy of the "Athapaskan" or Déné family, Major Powell should have omitted, in 1888, the name Déné-Dindjé, which had been publicly given to that aboriginal group by Petitot ever since 1875.

† Quoted in French by Petitot in his *Monographie des Déné-Dindjé*, p. xx.

states that some of the names are not tribal. He has no other fault to find with it. Now, I am almost certain that the very first tribe he mentions, the Ahtena, is not Déné.* Again I will ask: Where are in that list my TsiKoh'tin and my Sékanais (or Tsé'kéhné) and the Beavers and the Hares and the Dog-Ribs, etc.? Perhaps they are not really distinct tribes? will venture our reviewer. Let a single circumstance be my answer. When I was stationed among the TsiKoh'tin I used to preach without an interpreter. On my coming to Stuart's Lake, my residence since the last fourteen years, I could not understand or formulate a single sentence in Carrier. Moreover, who, with even a slight tincture of Déné phonology, could recognize as Déné the foreign looking Nagailer of Powell's list? Lastly, Tahltan—which should read Thahlthan†—is not the name of a tribe; it is a local name denominative of a body of water frequented by Indians within my sphere of action.

Commenting on that list, Mr. Campbell remarks: "The Montagnais are the Chippewyans or typical Athapaskans and their true name is Déné-Dindjié, . . . while the Slaves or Dogribs are the Thing-e-hadtinne."‡ The pre-occupation to find aboriginal names has evidently betrayed our reviewer into error and loose writing. The true name of the Montagnais or Chippewayans is *not* Déné-Dindjié, but simply Déné. As I have plainly noted in a monograph much quoted by Prof. Campbell,§ the compound word is a name invented by Father Petitot to designate the whole of the Déné family, not any single tribe thereof. On the other hand, the Slaves or Dog-Ribs are not a single tribe, as one would seem warranted to infer from the above quoted sentence. They are two distinct tribes, though their territory is contiguous. The Dog-Ribs are well known as such in ethnographical literature, while the Slaves are called Strong-Bow or Thick-Wood Indians in Franklin's journal.

On Mr. W. Dall's classification Dr. Campbell has no criticism to offer. Indeed he almost seems to approve of it, since he therewith compares mine disparagingly. In his eyes what I wrote of the former, ten years ago, must be so much useless scribbling. To make out for his silence, I will refer the unprejudiced reader to my remarks which I deem as apposite to-day as they were then.||

* See "Notes . . . on the Western Dénés," p. 15, foot-note, and p. 17, text.

† *Tha*, water (in composition), *hlthan*, lies (is stagnant, non-running). The population of that place is Nah'ane.

‡ P. 172.

§ "The Western Dénés," Proc. Can. Inst., Vol. vii., p. 110.

|| *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

"The classifications of Mr. Dall and Father Morice for the northern group are somewhat different, and that of the latter, who finds fault with Mr. Dall's, is obscured by English names that are confusing and of very little scientific value." This is from Mr. Campbell. With all due respect for my opponent's opinion, how can English names in an English paper obscure a classification of races and confuse the mind of the English reader? Should they not, on the contrary, rather enlighten to a greater extent than so many would-be aboriginal words differently reproduced according to the linguistic ability of the traveller or the fancy of the transcriber? And how in the world are they of so "very little scientific value?" To be scientific, ought an Englishman to call the French *les Français*, the Italians *gli Italiani*, the Spaniards *los Españols*, the Greeks *oi Έλληνες*, etc.? Everywhere words representing ethnic divisions follow the particular genius of the idiom of the speaker, and it seems to me that this should more particularly be the case with the names of American tribes which are generally so difficult, when not altogether impossible, to spell without diacritical marks or other accessories found only in a few printing offices. When I write in English, the Indians nearest to me are the Carriers; should my essay be in French they become the Porteurs, but, of course, in all my native publications they remain the TaKéne. So it goes with the Montagnais; they are Chippewayans to the English and Déné to themselves; with the Beavers, who are Castors to the French, Tsa'tenne to the Carriers, and Dané to themselves, etc.

According to Prof. Campbell, I maintain that "the Kutchin tribes of Mr. Dall are, all but one, imaginary." This is hardly the case. Of course I would not, even indirectly, accuse my opponent of misrepresentation; yet his remark is somewhat misleading. It would seem to imply that, to the exclusion of all the others, one of Dall's Kutchin tribes—which one?—is real. I did say, and must repeat, that those of his tribes noted under the title of Western Tinneh "have no existence but on paper." But my remarks about the Kutchin are not so sweeping. I simply "strongly suspect that the seven Kut-chin tribes which he gives as specifically different, are only so many subdivisions of the same tribe, all of whom speak the same dialect, probably with local idiomatic peculiarities."* Which remark does not exclude the possibility of Dall's divisions of the Kutchin being real, though of a secondary importance. Father Petitot is quite proficient in the language of the Loucheux or Kutchin whom he has visited both east and west of the Rocky Mountains. Now he never mentioned but one tribe, and while in

* The Western Dénés, Vol. vii., p. 110.

his dictionary he gives even slight idiomatic or local peculiarities affecting the Chippewyan or Hare languages, he never quotes more than one Loucheux dialect. Major Powell himself gives but one Kutchin or Loucheux tribe, though he writes some years after Mr. Dall.

"Father Morice objects to this (Mr. Dall's) list," says Dr. Campbell, who adds, "But what shall we say of his own list followed by the form in each case of the word for man?"* Thus the main burden of his criticism in my case is not that my classification of the northern tribes is inaccurate or incomplete—indeed he seems almost to find it too complete, since he objects to the presence therein of one tribe—but that it does not supply him with those "tribal names" which he seeks for the purpose of his attempts at identification. For he speaks further on of my "deliberate avoidance of personal names," and regrets that "being able to enlighten our darkness in this matter," I "should decline to lift the veil." I confess that, through the dozen or more pages I devoted in the most important of my essays† to the classing of the Déné tribes, I thought I had left very little unsaid on the subject. I am told I was mistaken, and must therefore hasten to make out for my omission.

The reason I did not give any name the different tribes call themselves by is that, as a rule, *there is none*. They have, of course, some kind of vocable by which they are differentiated by outsiders; but, as these names vary according to the dialect of the speaker, which one was I to choose? Thus the Carriers, who are Arene to the Tsé'Ke'hne, are 'Kutene to the Babines; the Tsi|Koh'tin would become Tse|Kwah'tinni for the Babines, Tse|Kaht'qenne for the Tsé'Kéhne, etc., unless those various tribes chose to give them an altogether different name.

As I stated in my first communication to the Canadian Institute, which Dr. Campbell has certainly seen, the different tribes simply call themselves "men," and that for two reasons. The mental vision of the Indian is proverbially limited; collectivity is generally beyond its grasp. It is also dim and blunt; hence its difficulty in taking in abstraction. But the tribe is an aggregate of septs, and septs a collection of clans. I do not speak of the family; among our natives it does not exist as a unit. The father belongs to one clan or gens, the mother and the offspring to another. You ask an Indian to what tribe he belongs, and he answers at once by the name of his clan. If you force him into giving a more comprehensive division, he may furnish you with the

* The Dénés of America identified with the Tungus of Asia, p. 173.

† Notes . . . on the Western Dénés, Trans. Can. Inst., Vol. iv., pp. 10-17 and pp. 22-32.

name of his particular sept though this would be unusual—he would rather give you the name of the locality, lake or river shore he inhabits. In no case will he go any further, unless his intercourse with the whites has taught him their mode of thinking and the name outsiders give to his tribe. This is so true that no Déné dialect, to my knowledge, has any synonymous term for tribe as distinct from clan. Even that large tribe in the midst of which I live, a tribe territorially so important that its members are found all the way within four degrees of latitude, may be said to have no personal name. TaKejne is a term of extraneous origin which is intrinsically meaningless, though usage has conferred upon it the signification of "Indians." In that sense it is applied by the Carriers to any body of aborigines by contradistinction from the terms white man, Chinese or negro.

The second reason of the absence of any tribal name among the Déné is that vanity innate in the heart of the Indian which prompts him to ignore other tribes or nations. In his opinion, fellow-tribesmen are "the people," "the men," *Déné*. This foible is not proper to the Déné; many other American tribes know it. For, as remarks Major Powell,* "the name by which the tribes distinguish themselves from other tribes indicates the further conviction that, as the Indian is above all other created beings, so in like manner each particular tribe is exalted above all others. "Men of men" is the literal translation of one name, "the only men" of another, and so on through the whole category." Even the various tribes of Esquimaux are no exception to this rule; their collective name *Innuît* means also "men." Nay more, according to Klaproth quoted by Prof. Campbell himself, "the Tungus have no common or national name; yet most who dwell in Siberia call themselves Boye, Boya or Bye, that is 'men'"†—another trait of resemblance with our Déné which may well console our essayist for the absence of any truly Déné tribal name.

Commenting further on my list of Northern Dénés, Mr. Campbell says that "the Yellow-Knives or Copper Indians are the Ahtena." This statement is erroneous. I have already asserted that the Ahtena or Atna are not Déné. Prof. Campbell here follows Major Powell, who has been misled by Mr. Dall, who in his turn misunderstood Hearne. The latter discovered in 1769 to the east of the great northern lakes a river called *Satson-Die* (metal river) by the Dog-Ribs, and Coppermine by its white discoverer. Now W. Dall, confounding this river with the Copper River which flows into the Pacific Ocean, placed on its banks the habitat

* Indian Linguistic Families, p. 36.

† The Dénés of America identified with the Tungus of Asia, Trans. C. I., Vol. v, p. 167.

of the Indians whom Franklin had found in the steppes watered by Hearne's Coppermine River. The Yellow-Knives, who, according to Petitot, are related to the Cariboo-Eaters, live to the northeast of Great Slave Lake. They are the Copper Indians of Franklin.

"But who are the Cariboo-Eaters?" asks Prof. Campbell. They are, according to Petitot, an important tribe which "hunts on the steppes lying to the east of lakes Cariboo, Wollaston and Athabaska. Fort Fond du Lac is their rendezvous on the latter lake."* The same information is to be found in the essay prefixed to his polyglot dictionary which Prof. Campbell has seen.

As an instance of hasty writing, I must quote another of the latter's statements. "The Loucheux," he says, "are the Kutchins, Father Morice's Tudukh,"—he means Tukudh, but the printer is probably responsible for the deformation of the name. Now I invariably called that tribe Loucheux, and the only time I mentioned at all the word Tukudh I did so by way of indirectly protesting against it. I said: "The Nah'ane hunt over a territory the northern limits of which are the southern frontiers of the Loucheux;" and in a foot-note I explained under the word Loucheux, "the *so-called* 'Tukudh' or 'Kut-chin.'"+ Small matter to be sure, but important enough in that it shows the degree of carefulness observed by a writer. The Anglican Bishop Bompas and the Rev. R. McDonald are the parties responsible for that nickname, and, after them, Pilling who wrongly thought it represented a tribe different from the Loucheux.‡

Another proof of the Rev. Mr. Campbell's hasty writing I find in his reproduction of my list of the septets of three Western Déné tribes. Not only does he mix up the extraneous names of those tribes with those of their subdivisions, but he omits one of the latter which is to be found in the *addenda* to the paper from which he derives the whole list. I must further add that the omission of the apostrophe denoting the all important exploding or clicking sound renders all these words meaningless in Indian.

"Father Morice has questioned the native origin of Déné government by *tenaz-as* (*lege tenezas*), notables or chiefs." Loose writing again. I never questioned the native origin of any such government since I asserted that the Dénés had no form of government whatever. In a paper published by the Royal Society of Canada, I did state that the

* *Mémoire abrégé sur la Géographie de l'Athabaska—MacKensie*, p. 224.

† *The Western Dénés*, Proc. Can. Inst., Vol. vii., p. 112.

‡ His "Bibliography of the Athapaskan Languages" is full of similar errors.

rank of chief or first magistrate of a village was of modern origin,* but we must not confound the notable or *taneza*, of whom there are several in one locality, and the chief or single leader or head man of a place. I was quite emphatic on that point.

I have stated that among the reasons that prompted the present communication was the fact that old misstatements about the ethnological status of our Indians have but lately been reprinted. No later than 1893, in such an otherwise accurate and complete work as the "Standard Dictionary,"† there appeared under the word American, the following list of all the Déné tribes, which is, I think, from the pen of Prof. O. T. Mason.

Athapascan.
Apache.
Chepewyan.
Hupa.
Jicarilla.
Kutchin.
Lipan.
Loucheux.
Mescalero.
Montagnais.
Navajo.
Slave.
Tinné.

Here, indeed, we have a list compared with which Dall's and Powell's are completeness itself. For it must be remarked that, brief as it appears, it is in reality even much shorter, since several tribes are therein twice mentioned under different names. To begin with, the first and the last terms, Athapascan and Tinné are synonymous. So are Chepewyan and Montagnais, Kutchin and Loucheux. In fact, of the twenty well authenticated Déné tribes, the author of the list gives but nine. Yet, while he omits such important tribes as the Carriers, the TsiKoh'tin, the Tsé'Kéhne, the Nah'ane, the Hares, etc., he mentions that remnant of a tribe, the Lipans, who, according to Powell, may number fifteen individuals in the United States, while they are not much more than twice as many in Mexico. Besides, if I mistake not, the Jicarilla are but one of the eight subdivisions of the Apache tribe that live north of Mexico. At least that is what one is led to infer from the Reports of the U. S. Commissioner for Indian affairs. If that official is correct, Major Powell is wrong on that and cognate points.

Finally, I must repeat that, in my opinion, the only accurate list of

* "Are the Carrier Sociology and Mythology Indigenous or Exotic?" Trans. R.S.C., 1892, p. 118.

† Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York.

all the Déné tribes so far published is to be found in my "Notes . . . on the Western Dénés," p. 16. Should I have a doubt to formulate, it would be in connection with that tribal division known as the Bad People or Mauvais Monde—concerning the precise habitat of which Petitot appears misinformed. He is inclined to believe them an offshoot of the Carrier tribe, which could not be. He says that they are very little known, and formerly frequented the now abandoned Fort Halkett. That they really exist as a tribe, however, is clearly shown by the fact that they are called by the other Dénés, *El'ga-o'tine*, "those that act contrariwise," that is in a wrong way, from their former habit of going naked. Their proper name is Diné.

For the sake of extra completeness, we might add to my list the few natives of Déné extraction found some years ago in the Nicola Valley, and on Portland Canal, B.C. But as they have lost their tribal autonomy to such an extent that in a majority of cases, they have even forgotten their original tongue and are now mostly of mixed blood, I think they may well be ignored in a classification of Indian tribes.